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AUTHOR	Conley, David T.; Goldman, Paul
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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on an investigation of educator reaction to one state's systemic school reform legislation. Educators have generally been reticent to embrace state-level legislation reform initiatives while simultaneously agreeing with their ultimate goals. Findings are the latest data in a 5-year longitudinal study begun in 1992 that focused on educator reactions to Oregon's 1991 comprehensive educational reform legislation (creating initial and advanced certificates of mastery and school-site councils). This report summarizes previous findings and builds upon them within an institutionalism and compliance-theory framework. Data were gathered from a series of 6 self-administered questionnaires distributed at 24 to 92 schools during fall 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, and spring and fall 1997. Survey instruments contained various multiquestion dimensions: changes in teaching context, curriculum change, teachers' engagement in reform activities, teacher support of reform provisions, assessment changes, attentiveness to at-risk students, and other factors. Primary effects of reform where more teachers agreed than disagreed were: to increase teacher workload; focus curriculum on state standards; increase schools' accountability; increase curriculum integration; increase teacher collaboration; and increase social-service integration into schools. Teacher attitudes toward reform are ambivalent, though teachers are moving slowly to accept reform requirements. Policy drift may have occurred, and compliance and institutionalist forces have slowed implementation. (Contains 57 references.) (MLH)

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How Educators Process and Respond to State-Level Education Reform Policies: The Case of Oregon

David T. Conley and Paul Goldman, Associate Professors
University of Oregon, College of Education, Eugene, OR 97403
david_conley@ccmail.uoregon.edu; pgoldman@oregon

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How Educators Process and Respond to State-Level Education Reform Policies: The Case of Oregon

David T. Conley and Paul Goldman, Associate Professors
University of Oregon, College of Education, Eugene, OR 97403
david_conley@ccmail.uoregon.edu; pgoldman@oregon

This research investigates the phenomenon of educator reaction to state systemic school reform legislation. This reaction can be characterized in terms of the reticence educators have shown to embrace state-level education reform initiatives while simultaneously agreeing with its ultimate goals. Our research findings reported here are the latest data in a five-year longitudinal study begun in 1992 focused on educator reactions to comprehensive education reform legislation passed in Oregon in 1991. We summarize previous findings, then build upon them within the theoretical framework of institutionalism and compliance theory, which we have adapted and extended to understand educator reactions to reform legislation, individually and at the level of the school building.

The challenge of state-level reform of education

It has become increasingly common over the past 25 years for state legislatures to initiate large-scale education reform programs (Chira, 1994; Medler, 1994; Steffy, 1993). This has occurred as the control of education funding has concomitantly moved from the local to the state level (Fuhrman, 1994; Hirth, 1996; Verstegen, 1994). While these reform initiatives have been relatively easy to create, they have proven much more difficult to implement successfully (Frahm, 1994; Harp, 1994).

This difficulty can be ascribed to a range of factors. Important among them are: a) the perception by educators that reforms will not be sustained; b) educators' world views based on a fundamental assumption that new resources must be provided for any new policy; c) legislators who have only recently assumed responsibility at the state level for providing the bulk of funding for education, and who now feel empowered to formulate broad schemes for educational redesign but lack experience, staff support, or any clear sense of how schools will respond; d) a public that seems ambivalent at best toward educational reform, and lack of a clear constituency for change; e) deeply-ingrained cynicism that schools cannot be changed; f) the view that the reform programs are overly ambitious, take too much time to implement, or are otherwise impractical when overlaid on the current model of schooling (Conley 1997; Goldman and Conley 1997; Conkling, 1997; National Governors' Association, 1994; The Nelson Report, 1997; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). While the goals of reforms have increasingly been centered on improved student learning (Rothman, 1993), states seem unsure if the appropriate focus of reform policy is to change teachers, change schools, change governance and accountability structures, or change all in some combination (Fuhrman, 1993).

Oregon's landmark school reform legislation, passed in 1991, revised in 1995, and reaffirmed in 1997 (Goldman and Conley 1997), serves as a test case to explore the limits of legislative power to reshape schooling and to consider how educators process state mandates. The Oregon legislation charged the state education agency with developing two competency-based certificates, the basic skills oriented Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) at grade 10 and the career-path oriented Certificate of Advanced Mastery (CAM) at grade 12. The law also mandated site councils which became especially important because schools themselves were charged with developing the details of curriculum and assessment for both CIM and CAM.

Through an annual survey with accompanying comments combined with focus group data, we have been able to track educator perceptions of the reforms over a five-year period. These data allow us to explore attitudes toward mandated reforms, the evolution of forces that shape these attitudes, and the specific changes in educational practices that result. Furthermore, they provide a basis for considering the role of legislatures and state departments of education in this process. We utilize the analysis of these data to raise questions about educator compliance to state dictates and to consider the limits of legislative authority in the context of the current policy implementation structure.

Literature review

How do school systems change and even restructure, as opposed to individual school buildings? What are the linkages between national and state educational policy intentions and actions and the implementation that occurs in schools in terms of teacher behavior and educational outcomes? What environmental, organizational, and individual features of schools contribute to or retard change and, more important, how do they interact during the change process? Why do teachers and schools so persistently resist change? These issues have fascinated scholars and perplexed policy makers and practitioners in the wake of the second and third waves of school reform as states passed major school restructuring legislation in the late 1980s and through the 1990s. What do we know so far about outcomes of these reforms? What social science conceptual best help us understand these outcomes?

What do we know so far about systemic reform?

A report by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (1996) noted that many states have adopted standard-based reforms in an effort to forge more coherent policy even in the absence of public consensus or the allocation of significant resources to put the reforms in place. They note further that these state initiatives, and the proponents of reform generally, have not yet provided coherent, effective guidance on how to improve instruction, have put more emphasis on structural changes and finance

issues than on high-quality instruction, and have not been particularly realistic in understanding what is likely to work or is even possible. However, the report argues that schools have demonstrated substantial changes in practice, attitude, and student achievement.

These achievements have been uneven. Researchers have noted that it has been particularly difficult to translate state mandates into significant and observable behavior change at the building level (Fuhrman, 1993; Wilson and Rossman, 1993; McLaughlin, 1990), particularly changes in teaching and learning. The research suggests policy-makers establish broad, sometimes inconsistent mandates, usually without much input from school-based educators, and then establish unrealistic timelines (Bacharach, 1990; Cohen, 1993; Elmore and Fuhrman 1994; Odden, 1991). Elmore (1990) observes that much of the energy of the reform movement is rhetorical, and Conley (1997) notes that much of the attraction to "restructuring" may result from its vagueness and the lack of clear definition of what restructuring actually means. Fuhrman (1994) asserts that "policymakers must understand that policies require time to exert their effects and that there is likely to be a long gap between changes in practice and results, particularly with respect to effects on student learning . . . Policymakers need to build in a consistent direction" (p. 43). Few would argue that they have done either. Hurley's (1998) study of three Oregon high schools highlights the disjunctures and natural tensions between what Guba (1984) has called policy-in-intention, policy-in-action, and policy-in-experience.

Nevertheless, there have been arenas—Kentucky for instance—in which state mandates have substantially changed the tenor of educational processes and educational accountability (Steffy, 1993). State-level reforms do at times reach into buildings and classrooms. However, even in Kentucky, the legislature shows indications of modifying dramatically or substantively backing off of the accountability system it established in 1990 as schools exert pressure in response to the full effects of sanctions and external pressures to improve (White 1998). Fullan (1994) found that when mandates "connect" with the aspirations and capabilities of local schools, significant change may ensue: "breakthroughs occur when productive connections add up to create pressure for systems to change" (Fullan, 1994 p. 1). Clune and Elmore (1988) cite examples of local school districts strategically managing in ways that attach their own priorities to state goals, playing off local commitments against state resources.

Fullan (1994) found that this "top-down/bottom-up" principle applies to local/state relationships as well, and that change occurs when top-down mandates and bottom up initiatives "connect". Fuhrman, Clune and Elmore (1988, in Fullan 1994 p. 4) cite examples of "many local districts going far beyond compliance . . . actively orchestrating various state policies around local priorities, strategically interacting with the state to achieve goals." Odden and March (1988, in Fullan, 1994 p. 4) found that "education reform legislated at the state level can be an effective means of improving schools

when it is woven into a cohesive strategy at the local level." Simultaneous top-down and bottom-up strategies are essential, according to Fullan (1994) because dynamically complex societies are always full of surprises (Senge, 1990; Stacey, 1992, in Fullan,1994). "Breakthroughs occur when productive connections add up to create pressure for systems to change" (Fullan, 1994 p. 1).

A significant body of recent research looks at the individual school building as the focal point for understanding school restructuring and school change (Fullan, 1991; Fullan and Miles 1992; Louis and Miles 1990; Murphy and Hallinger 1993; Stockard and Mayberry 1992; Teddlie and Stringfield 1993). Considering schools as a unit of analysis has a degree of methodological elegance: schools are small enough that researchers can look at classrooms, observe meetings, interview teachers, parents, and children, and administer surveys. At the same time, schools generate and reflect the types of data that make for easily understood comparisons. Student and staff demographic characteristics, school size and elementary or secondary status, and student performance profiles have real meaning. It is in schools, after all, where teaching and learning take place, where the outcomes that matter do or do not occur. And schools are bounded systems in the sense that a set of rich, sustained interactions occur and can be studied.

Finally, schools vary considerably in their capacity for change. Rosenholtz (1989), for example was able to distinguish between "stuck" and "moving" schools among the 78 she studied in the mid-1980s. Leithwood (1995) studied several dozen British Columbia schools for several years in the early 1990s following provincially mandated changes outlined in the Year 2000 Legislation. Our own research has followed a similar path with five years of surveying between 92 and 25 Oregon schools annually (Conley and Goldman, 1995; Goldman and Conley, 1997). These studies, along with case studies reported by Louis and Miles (1990) and Murphy and Hallinger (1993) have attempted to discern identify predictive, or at least explanatory, factors that distinguish between schools that change and those that don't.

This research provides coherent interpretations of, and sharp insights into, the sources of school restructuring: effective leadership, a clear vision to which the school community is committed, a sufficiently cohesive and collaborative staff, and adequate skills and resources are almost always present in schools that change. In addition, these schools often take advantage of some sort of external stimuli, be it a reform movement, legislation, district policy, or a grant competition. Thus far, however, the complexity and variance present in these schools and those that are "stuck" seems to have defeated or greatly limited efforts to create systematic explanation or theory. Discussions and interpretations of findings are usually atheoretical, creating lists of contributing factors without demonstrating how the factors might interact or explaining plausible sequences of events. Explanations tend to draw only selectively, if at all, on previous theory and research in social and organizational science.

Establishing a link with theory

We suggest that established theory may help us understand both restructuring at the school site and the connection between state initiative and local reaction. At least three intellectual traditions provide a set of intellectual building blocks: (1) institutionalism and (organizational) culture theory; (2) compliance theory; and (3) the notion of loose and tight coupling within systems. The first two come directly from disciplinary social science. Institutionalization/culture originates in both sociology and anthropology as interpreted by organizational theorists, and compliance theory derives from social psychology. Organizational coupling and organizational configuration emerged in the organizational science literature, although the latter contains overtones of earlier thinking from biology and sociology.

We discuss theories of institutionalism and organizational culture together because both deal with the powerful organizing principles that cause societies, organizations, and groups to persist over time and the tendency for everyday behaviors and habits to become entrenched, unexamined and influential even if they are no longer necessarily in the best interest of the group.

Research and writing on organizational cultures in education stresses the power of shared understandings and expectations reinforced over time (Cunningham and Gresso, 1993; Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Ott, 1989; Rossman and Firestone, 1988). School cultures delineate what it is individuals are expected to know, how they are to behave, what the meanings of school sagas and stories are, and what new individuals have to learn in order to function effectively. Shared goals, shared experiences, and shared challenges strengthen the culture. Cultures operate below the surface, and actors are often more aware of violations of the culture than they are of cultural norms. School, and for that matter district, cultures have distinctive elements. While two or more schools may appear to be similar, their cultures are a reflection of individual and group relationships over time and may be dramatically different.

Part of the culture will be based not only on "what we are supposed to do," but also on how a specific colleague or colleagues will respond or react. As Ouchi (1980) points out in Theory Z, strong cultures reflect social structures built on interpersonal "intimacy, subtlety, and trust." Shared backgrounds and training, generally shared goals and values, and relatively low turnover create stability in school cultures. However, so do alienation and individualization when linked with weak leadership and stability.

School change, especially the extensive change required by some restructuring legislation, confronts the existing culture in many schools, and at times the culture makes progress difficult or impossible. School reformers and change agents attempt to take culture into account through co-optation, through strategic manipulation of sub-cultures, and even through managing turnover. But this can only be done locally--state agencies cannot be

knowledgeable enough about specific school cultures to craft policies that will be workable in every, or even most, school sites.

Institutionalist approach

The institutionalist approach takes the cultural issues of everyday organizational life to a societal level. As Everett Hughes wrote in 1939:

> The term institution is applied to those features of social life which outlast biological generations or survive drastic social changes that might have been expected to bring them to an end... [There exists] a tendency of human beings to get set in their ways. . . Man transmits to future generations a great number of his acquired ways of behaving. He alone gives reasons for his ways, makes a virtue of them and glorifies them for antiquity.

Institutionalism is a very powerful concept when applied to education and educational change because all citizens--policy makers, teachers, parents--share a more or less common frame of reference about schools. School calendars and master schedules, grade levels, grading systems, and subject matter labels are remarkably similar to those of the past two or three generations. In our minds, they seem fixed and timeless, in part because almost everyone already experienced them at a time in their lives when they were shaping their world view.

Hence, most citizens have a clear sense of what schools are "supposed to be." Metz (1990) calls the phenomenon "real school" while Louis and Kruse (1995) call it "schoolness." The power of the institutional metaphor becomes clear in public reactions whenever legislators or educators attempt to change "basic" policies, for instance moving to year-round schools or eliminating letter grades.

Institutionalization is tied to legitimacy, a point stressed by the so-called "new institutionalists" whose work on organizations as institutions emerged in the late 1970s. This work, beginning with John Meyer's (1977; Meyer and Rowan, 1977) research on the almost mythological effects of school rules and formal structures, suggested ways in which organizations almost unconsciously create themselves over time. Intentionality is far less significant that "the unreflective, routine, taken-for-granted nature of most human behavior." (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991). Neo-institutionalism provides an explanation for the rationale, observable at virtually any time, for maintaining a status quo. This rationale seems so normal that people rarely appreciate ways in which they benefit from it or that it limits possibilities and options.

The concept, in both its "traditional" and "new" forms, also helps explain part of the inertia which we read as resistance to change, and the ways in which even changes get co-opted into the old order. This seems particularly relevant for understanding reactions to school restructuring mandates. When schools do restructure, they often search out, visit, and sometimes copy other schools, and gain legitimacy from doing so. While imitation allows schools and other organizations to borrow or expropriate

good ideas, it also reinforces organizational conservatism because shared expectations of what schools, even good schools, should be like, often encourages schools to conform to educator and public expectations of what schools are supposed to be like.

Institutionalism explains the "chicken and egg" dilemma faced by most schools that are challenged to change as a result of external pressure: should they seek to improve within the boundaries of accepted norms of schooling, or do they look elsewhere, abandon the safety of accepted modes of doing business in hopes of dramatically improved results, knowing full well these new ways of doing business will not be accepted (at least initially) by many constituents. As long as a school continues to resemble "real school," the public and the school bureaucracy will grant it legitimacy. However, continuing to do what it has always done will likely result in what it has always gotten. Outside agents (reformers, accountability legislation, an ambitious superintendent) often advocate the abandonment of traditional structures in favor of large-scale redesign to bring about dramatic improvements in learning. Even the poorest performing schools have few incentives to take this leap in light of institutionalist norms. Educators risk losing legitimacy, which may be more important than improved educational performance.

The concept of social compliance allows us to take our exploration of school restructuring to the personal and interpersonal levels, and helps explain why otherwise similar school buildings may differ from one another. Note, however, that as social psychologists (Aronson, 1988; Kelman, 1958; Yukl, 1991) have typically applied the concept, they have focused on personal, usually hierarchical, relationships rather than on the somewhat impersonal organizational forces that characterize school restructuring.

Gary Yukl (1991, p. 13) suggests that compliance reflects an apathetic, unenthusiastic willingness to be responsive and usually implies individuals will contribute only minimal efforts. Compliance may affect behavior, in the short term at least, without affecting attitudes. Kelman's (1958) classic article on compliance makes a similar point: behavior is altered to gain specific rewards or avoid sanctions without internalization of values. Aronson (1988) suggests that social psychology's approach to compliance treats it as being closely linked to both conformity and to social influence. In general, individuals will comply when they identify in some fashion with those who issue directives or requests. For example, they may personally like or respect their superiors, or they may share the same values or visions with them. In the literature on educational reform, this view is reflected by the attention given to the functions of leadership and the importance of a shared sense of goals or mission.

Some distinctive characteristics of schools and school reform make compliance especially relevant to understanding teacher behavior. First, educational authority is diffuse, and at times quite distant, reducing power

derived from hierarchical relationships. Building administrators balance competing demands, and often have mixed feelings about state or district mandates, which makes them much more likely to equivocate or adopt a minimal, or compliant stance toward any policy, at least until they determine the costs associated with it. Second, external policies can create internal conflict: compliance stances minimize conflict since they represent a level of response which is justifiable by any member of the organization under the rationale of legal compulsion. Third, sometimes it is difficulty to comply even when teachers are willing to do so: mandates are often broad and/or vague, sometimes they are contradictory, often they require resources or skills teachers may not have and can't easily obtain, and compliance may require cooperation among teachers, so that even willing teachers may be held back by those who do not wish to comply.

As Aronson (1988) notes, compliance and resistance are distinct phenomena. This is an important point because teachers are in general good organizational citizens, used to working within an established context and most rarely if ever rebel or even rock the boat. For them, the lines between committed participation, compliance, and passive resistance are blurred and may not be clearly visible to outsiders, colleagues, and even to themselves. Also, it is easy for educators to have difficulty distinguishing between their good intentions and their actual effects, particularly in terms of student learning gains, the focus of much of the current reform legislation. This phenomenon makes it easier for teachers to feel comfortable judging the appropriateness and feasibility of externally-generated reforms. The net effect is for teachers to feel justified in adapting minimally to policies while at the same time not espousing overt resistance.

Michael Fullan (1996) suggests a critical link between institutionalism, culture, compliance, and, as we discuss below, the connectedness of educational institutions. He suggests that teachers are part of a system, and how they relate to the system and to one another partially explains how they make meaning of, and do or don't comply in ways that translate mandates into building level changes.

In the mid-1970s, Karl Weick introduced organizational scholars to the concept of "loose coupling," that is, the disposition of some organizations to function effectively even when parts (sub-units or individuals) seem to be moving in different, incompatible directions. His first paper applied the construct to universities; later he suggested that it worked for k-12 schools as well (Weick, 1976, 1982). Researchers in educational administration (Fennell, 1994; Firestone and Wilson 1985; Herriott and Firestone 1984; Logan 1993; Willower 1982) have elaborated on loose coupling in K-12 schools. Their research suggests that constitutions, charters, and organization charts notwithstanding, that schools are only loosely held together by rules, by none-too-rigorous external accountability and internal supervision, by educators' shared values, and by strong conceptions of what school is. Understanding

"coupling" has implications for both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of educational organization.

Looking vertically, that is, at systemic relationships between state authorities and local schools, Weick's work implied that centralized decision-making and management would be more likely to stifle than to promote instructional efficacy. Supporting this assumption, Rosenholtz (1989) found that most reform efforts fail because of an excessive preoccupation with structure and legalities and an inability to focus on teaching and learning and supportive collaborative cultures.

Herein lies the dilemma for policy makes and state education officials: for educational reform to effect an actual school restructuring, it has to create a clear enough structure, and some kind of sanctioning power, to break teachers and clients from institutionalized expectations. But even aside from the likelihood that significant changes would provide outright resistance, the changes might make it impossible for teachers to translate policy into programs that match the needs of students in each school. Peters and Waterman (1982) discussed the problem of simultaneously maintaining "loose" and "tight" control in corporations. But few corporations operate as many sites as even small states have schools, corporations are not nearly as captive to public political process, and, unlike in education, corporate headquarters receives fealty by virtue of controlling a much more potent reward and sanction structure.

Organizational coupling has a horizontal dimension as well. The institutionalization of teacher individualism and autonomy has contributed to some of the frustrations reformers and administrators have had in translating state mandates into substantive changes at the building level (Conley and Goldman, 1997; Fuhrman, 1993; McLaughlin, 1991). Teachers' ability to work effectively behind the closed door of the classroom is a cherished institution. What this has meant is that while teachers may work together, program planning and team teaching for instance, they cannot be compelled to do so.

Statewide school restructuring, however, adds a new variable to the school building equation. As states provide a larger proportion of funding, they feel much more comfortable and obliged to impose accountability standards as well. The development of both standards-based assessments and publicly reported state tests has begun to make individual teachers and schools more aware that educational accountability expectations may be increasing; correspondingly, teachers now have more stake in their colleagues effectiveness. Teacher "effectiveness" may not only be translated into individual performance, it may require new collaboration and programs that result in more tightly coupled school buildings. Ongoing research on school responses to Oregon's school reform mandates suggests that some teachers and some schools have been willing and able become more tightly coupled

internally (Tindal, et al., 1997; Goldman and Tindal, 1998; Hurley, 1998). As Odden (1991) argues

> Research confirms that: school restructuring shows some promise for producing substantial change; district and site leadership is important; teacher involvement in designing and implementing change activities is still important; ongoing, follow through assistance to teachers and schools and classrooms is still the *sine qua non* for producing change in classroom practices; teacher commitment and effort are critical; without effort and commitment, change rarely occurs (p. 324).

At the same time, we need to bear in mind that the strongest pressures on schools are cultural and institutional: even where individual schools initiate significant changes, these will be difficult to sustain over time unless they are in a broader environmental system that supports them.

Research methods

Research data come from a series of self-administered questionnaires distributed and returned during fall 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, and spring and fall 1997. We revised the instrument during 1996. A total of 92 schools were included in the 1992 sample, 64 from a state random sample and 28 from two mid-sized "case study districts" in which we surveyed every school in the district. The 1993 sample of 24 schools was drawn from among schools surveyed the previous year. For the 1994 sample, all schools in the 1993 sub-sample were re-surveyed, 24 more schools were randomly selected from the remaining schools in the original sample and an additional 24 schools, not previously surveyed, were selected by a random process and added to the sample. Analysis of demographic data and response patterns indicated that the newly added schools were similar to those in the original sample. The 1995 sample contained the same school sample as 1994. In each school, questionnaires were distributed to all certified staff. The survey instrument contained 99 "agree-disagree" questions in 1992 and 1993. The number of questions was cut to 50 for 1994 and 1995.

Over the four year period, we were able to create three distinct additive scales measuring general attitudes towards change, expectation that teacher and school practices would be altered, and anticipated outcomes or effects of reform legislation. In addition to forced-choice items, there were demographic questions, open ended questions, and a "comments" section. Response rates were very close to 66 percent each year.

We revised the instrument substantially in 1996, keeping the items that best reflected agreement or differences of educator opinion on reform, while adding two new sections to ascertain the linkage between distinct elements of the reform and specific teacher responses, and to determine in greater depth teacher mindset regarding the reforms. We piloted the revised instrument in the spring of 1997 with selected schools, and readministered it

in the fall to 29 schools, 25 from our original sample and 4 new schools. The new sites were selected randomly from among a sample designed to maintain the same balance as existed in the previous sample in terms of geography and school size. These schools reported distributing 1012 survey instruments to staff and returned 644, for a response rate of 64 percent.

Surveys were distributed in fall, 1997. Follow-up calls were made to schools not returning surveys, and a second mailing was made to those who indicated a subsequent willingness to distribute the survey. Responses were received from October 1997 through February 1998. Surveys were entered and analyzed in Statview v. 4.5.

Preliminary analyses of the data, including a series of factor analyses, suggests the new survey instruments contain a number of distinct, multi-question dimensions: (1) changes in teaching context (2) curriculum change (3) teachers' actual engagement in reform activities (4) teacher support of provisions of reform legislation (5) perceived changes due to CIM related assessments (6) perceived changes due to CAM related assessments (7) attentiveness to at risk students (8) attitude toward change (much the same as in previous surveys) (9) desire to "wait out the changes" (10) personal support structure (11) perceptions of school context (12) perceptions of external stakeholders Understanding and explaining how educators differ on these dimensions will be one of the tasks of our next round of data analysis.

General findings from the data

We found remarkably little difference in the perceptions of and attitudes toward school reform teachers have across any of our demographic variables which included school level, gender, age, experience, and likelihood of retiring within seven years levels. This is consistent with previous findings. Some differences exist on items that are more specific to a particular school level (e.g., certificates of mastery awarded at the high school level).

Perceived effects

The primary effects of reform as gauged by questions where more teachers agreed than disagreed have been to increase: 1) to increase teacher workload; 2) to focus curriculum on state standards; 3) to increase accountability for schools; 4) to increase curriculum integration; 5) to increase teacher collaboration; 6) to increase social service integration into schools. Perceptions of most likely effects in five years are the same, except that somewhat fewer teachers believe teacher workload will increase in five years, and more than half of the teachers also believe schools will have better career preparation programs and more coordination across grade levels in five years as a result of reform.

Table 1

POSSIBLE EFFECTS (1= disagree, 2= agree)	Now	In 5 yrs.
Increased teacher workload	1.98	1.93
Curriculum being focused on state content standards	1.82	1.90
Increase in accountability for school sites and districts	1.71	1.78
Greater curriculum integration across subject areas	1.62	1.73
Increased teacher in collegiality and cooperation	1.57	1.56
Greater integration of social services in schools	1.54	1.57
Greater coordination of curr. across grades and schools	1.48	1.70
More diversity in the ways students are grouped for learning	1.44	1.52
Increase in teacher control over instruct. program at school	1.43	1.32
Improve learning for minority students	1.39	1.45
Improved learning for special education students	1.36	1.37
Better career preparation due to Certif. of Advanced Mastery	1.28	1.59
More children entering kindergarten prepared to learn	1.24	1.32
Decrease in dropouts due to Certificate of Initial Mastery	1.12	1.31

Perceptions of reform

Teachers responded to a series of questions where they were asked to agree or disagree with statements that characterized their attitudes toward reform. Teachers agreed most strongly with the idea that: an increase in funding for training and program development would make a big difference in implementing reform; there has been too much change too fast in education; the current system isn't working for many kids; intent of reform is to use student performance to judge schools; intent of reform is to meet the needs of business; it is time for fundamental change in education. The item with which they agreed least was education reform was an opportunity to do what they had always wanted to do.

Table 2

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ABOUT ATTITUDE TOWARD SCHOOL REFORM, 4= strongly agree, 3= agree, 2= disagree, 1= strongly disagree	
Increase in funds for training & planning	3.47
There has been too much change too fast for schools	2.93
The current system isn't working for many kids	2.73
Intent is to use student performance to judge schools.	2.73
It is time for fundamental change in education.	2.73
Intent is to meet the needs of business.	2.73
I understand what I must do to comply with 3565/2991	2.59
The ideas behind H.B. 3565/2991 make sense	2.58
Opportunity to do things I've always wanted to do	2.23

Activities in which teachers engage in response to reform and degree to which engagement was in response to reform

Most frequent activities in which teachers engaged in response to reform were develop new curriculum, modify curriculum, participating in inservices, and develop school improvement plans. Activities engaged in least frequently in response to reform were against reform being implemented, and visit other schools to learn about reform programs.

Respondents were then asked to indicate the degree to which they were engaging in the behaviors discussed previously (and others not reported) as a direct result of school reform legislation. The activities in which they engaged as a direct response to school reform most frequently was modifying and developing curriculum.

Table 3

ENGAGEMENT IN REFORM-RELATED ACTIVITIES (4= completely; 3= great deal; 2= some; 1= little or none)	How engaged	In response to reform
Modify curriculum	2.57	2.09
Develop new curriculum	2.56	2.05
Participate in development of school improvement plan	2.38	2.29
Participate in inservice on standards, assessment, state tests	2.36	2.68
Plan with colleagues	2.28	1.87
Read articles, discuss new teaching ideas with peers	2.21	1.74
Read, discuss materials from ODE	2.21	2.44
Integrate curriculum across subjects or grade levels	2.14	1.77
Use technology to help students meet standards	2.14	1.77
Career awareness activities or school-to-work programs	2.11	1.79
Hold special needs students to same standards as others	2.08	1.68

Develop strategies for low-achieving students	2.01	1.97
Learn about programs in other schools	1.80	1.98
Wait for more specific direction from ODE	2.24	
Wait for more evidence of commitment from legislature	2.19	
Wait for more specific direction from district	2.14	
Wait for more specific direction from principal	2.07	
Wait for commitment from business community	1.87	
Work against reform being implemented	1.29	

Effects on practice and support for elements of school reform

The three elements having the most effect on teaching practices were benchmarks for student performance, CIM tests, and CIM work samples. Support was also highest for benchmarks, but support for grants to schools was the highest of any item, whereas perceived effect was not as high as benchmarks and CIM elements.

Table 4

EFFECT ON PRACTICE OF INITIATIVE AND SUPPORT FOR INITIATIVE (4= profound or complete; 3= significant or great deal; 2= some; 1= little or none)	Effect	Support
Benchmarks for student performance	2.36	2.38
CIM (state tests)	2.28	2.16
CIM (student work samples)	2.28	2.19
Grants to schools	2.12	2.58
Site councils	2.07	2.36
Accountability requirements (e.g., Oregon Report Card)	1.77	1.93
CAM (state tests)	1.76	1.95
Demands from business community to improve education	1.74	1.98
CAM (school-to-work experiences)	1.68	2.14
Higher education admission requirements (PASS)	1.66	2.00
CAM (endorsements)	1.61	1.96
Pressure from parents to initiate reform	1.52	1.88

Attitudes shaping support for reform

The most important single element shaping teacher support for education reform is the teacher's personal value system followed closely by his or her understanding of what they are to do. Also important is their belief that they can be successful once reforms are implemented.

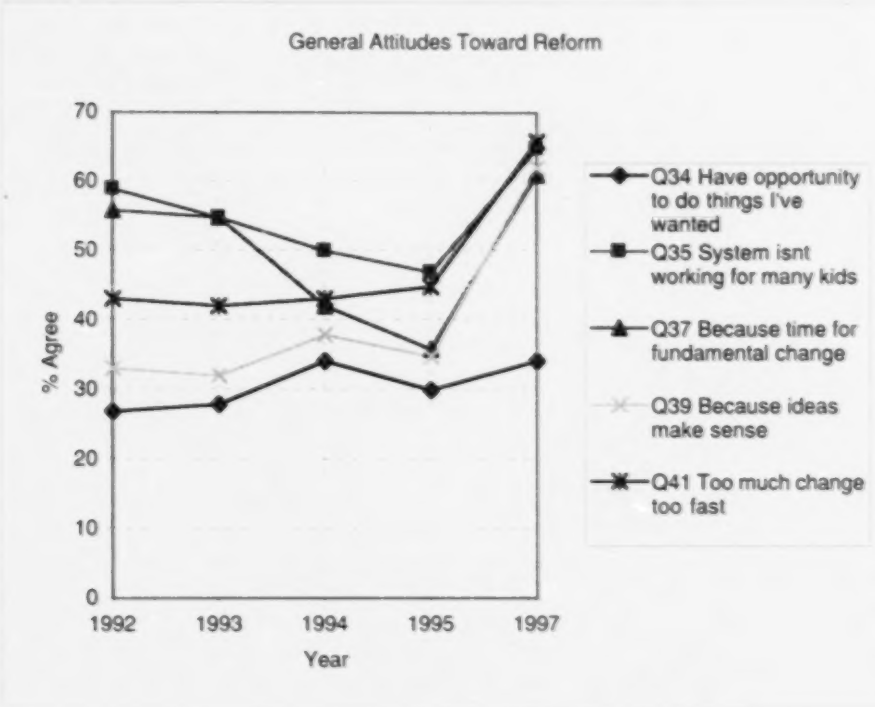
The actions of the principal are the most important influence on attitudes followed by the department of education and the legislature. Least influential were the superintendent and school board.

Table 5

ATTITUDES SHAPING SUPPORT; (4= profound; 3= significant; 2= some; 1= little or none)	
My personal value system	3.06
My understanding of what specifically I am supposed to do	2.91
Our principal's opinions and actions	2.41
My belief that I can be successful once reforms are implemented.	2.38
The norms of our school	2.31
Opinions of my closest colleagues at the school	2.27
Our school's history with school reform	2.27
Directives or information from the State Department of Education	2.23
The actions of the state legislature	2.18
Generally-held attitudes by my colleagues at the school	2.09
Our superintendent's opinions and actions	2.09
Our school board's opinions and actions	2.06
The actions of colleges and universities	1.89
The actions of the business community	1.80
A specific event at our school	1.69

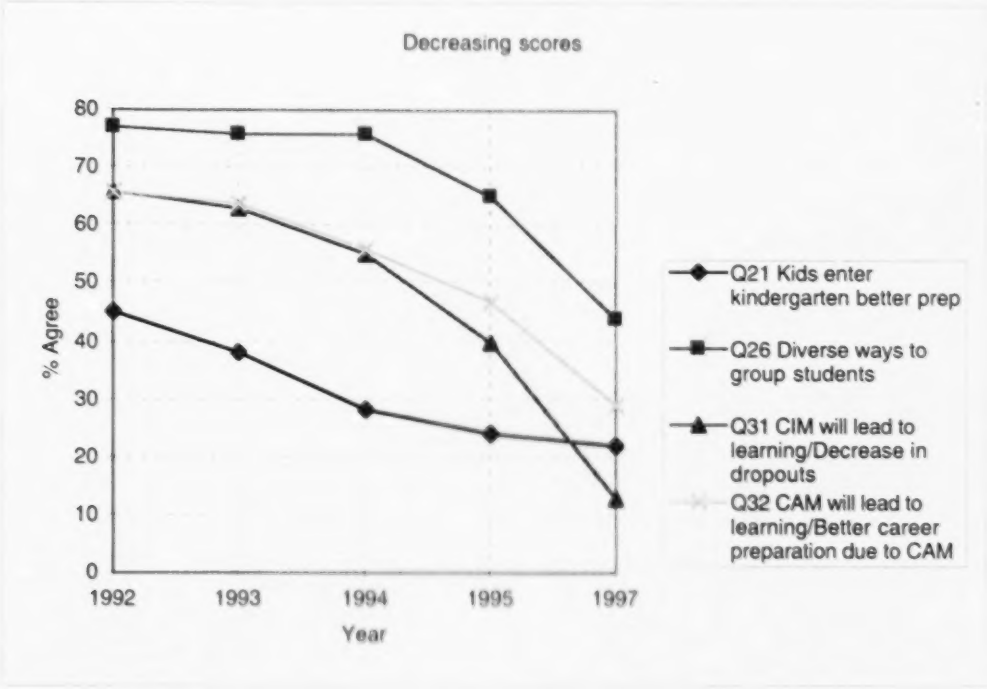
Responses over time to selected items

Table 6



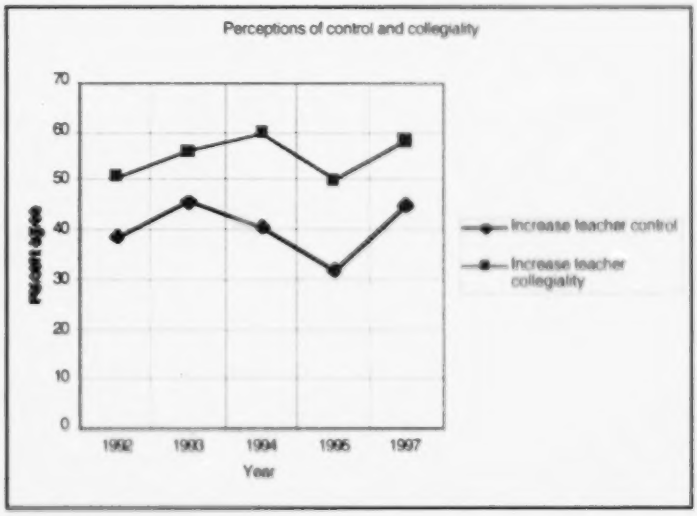
The proportion of respondents who indicate the law is a chance to do what they've always wanted to do remained in the same general range it has been all five years. Agreement with the notion that it is time for fundamental change in education, that the ideas in school reform make sense, that the current system isn't working for many kids, and that school reform represents too much change too fast for schools all showed significant increases.

Table 7



Confidence that school reform will result in improved student performance seemed to decrease. It should be noted that the questions on CIM and CAM were changed to focus more directly on learning issues and responses may not be comparable. At the least, the questions were reworded in a form that made it more difficult to answer in the affirmative.

Table 8



Teacher perception that the reforms would increase control and collegiality for teachers each increased but remained within a range that has been consistent over the five years.

Other measures over time

The following table summarizes scores on a scale we constructed each year to summarize teacher attitudes toward change. The scale is a compilation of several items related to perceptions of change. The chart provides data on all demographic variables included in the survey.

Table 9

Attitude towards change" scale by demographic data, 1992-97

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1997
Sample					
Mean	.51	.50	.47	.44	.61
Standard Deviation	.31	.31	.33	.33	.12
Position					
Teachers	.50	.48	.45	.43	.61
Other certified staff	.54	.56	.53	.51	.63
Administrators	.66	.65	.68	.54	.66
Gender					
Men	.53	.48	.45	.41	.62
Women	.51	.52	.49	.47	.61
Age					
20-29	.49	.56	.45	.42	.63
30-39	.49	.51	.50	.39	.61
40-49	.53	.49	.46	.46	.61
50-59	.52	.51	.48	.46	.61
60+	.48	.63	.54	.43	.61
Experience					
1-5 years	.51	.58	.50	.47	.63
6-10 years	.52	.52	.50	.41	.62
11-20 years	.51	.48	.47	.44	.62
21-30 years	.52	.49	.44	.45	.60
31+ years	.50	.50	.56	.37	.58
School Level					
High schools	.57	.52	.48	.44	.61
Junior high & middle	.51	.50	.45	.46	.63
Elementary	.45	.44	.47	.42	.59
N	2,260	602	1,247	1,093	608

Note: This scale, reported as "attitude" or "attitude towards change" in reports is a summary of agree/disagree responses to the following statements on the 1992, 1993, 1994, & 1995 surveys:

It is time for fundamental change in education
Ideas make sense
Current system isn't working for many kids
Too much change too fast for schools (reverse coded)

Scale scores are standardized was a maximum of 1.0 (all "agrees") and a minimum of 0 (all "disagrees"). Individual scores and means can be read as percentage of statements with which respondents agreed. Responses to the 1997 statements were on a 4-point Likert scale and not entirely comparable to the earlier results.

The table reinforces our general sense that demographic categories aren't particularly important. Note that differences between teachers and administrators are less in the new sample but the N is very small.

Discussion

Teacher attitudes toward reform can be characterized as perhaps ambivalent, while behaviors can be generalized as moving slowly to adapt reform requirements. The lack of discernable differences across all demographic categories suggests at the least that some generalizations about teacher responses to reform should probably be questioned, namely that older teachers and secondary school teachers are automatically more resistant to reform. Teachers seem to be demonstrating aspects of "institutionalist" reactions to reform, following the lead of the principal and looking more to the initiators of the reform (i.e., the state) than local authorities for validation and evidence of commitment before implementing further.

Teachers rely on their own value systems as a primary filter for determining their response to reform. They also look to their colleagues and the norms present in their schools as significant influences. Teachers do not actively oppose reform. Rather, they respond through familiar activities such as revising curriculum. They process information from the department of education while they withhold final judgment about their participation in reform. They respond to the aspects of reform that are most specific, namely tests and benchmarks that specify student knowledge and skill. While grants to schools are popular, they are not necessarily one of the primary influences in changing educational practice currently. In large measure, this is probably due to the fact that few grants are identified as being specifically for the purposes of implementing reform. Goals 2000 grants are prevalent, but not all schools receive them.

These data suggest a system that is only loosely connected hierarchically, that can be influenced from various levels based on the issue and the consequence. These data tend to reinforce the notion that policy is processed in a "top-down, bottom-up" fashion, that teachers are, or need to be, active participants in constructing meaning from the reforms presented to them, and that teachers must at some level understand and accept the reforms for the reforms to be implemented successfully.

Teachers tend to process reform in terms of its effect on their workload and through the filter of their educational philosophy, opinions of their peers and school norms. Teachers do not seem to be simply waiting to be directed, although they do look for more specifics from the state. They have their own opinions on the relative likelihood the reforms will improve education. At the same time, they continue to look around for signs that it is all right to redesign schools in substantial ways, and appear to be holding back from anything more than modest curriculum redesign and learning about state standards and tests as their initial response to reform. They are not convinced that they should take the risks or expend the energy needed to redesign the system; rather they prefer to interpret reform in terms of incrementalist responses whenever and wherever possible.

If education reform in Oregon was initiated for the purpose of creating a broad transformative vision of education that educators would utilize as the basis for redesigning their individual schools, it has probably fallen short of the mark. If it was an attempt to align teaching and learning around standards and tests established by the state, it is probably well on its way to achieving its goal.

What has likely occurred in Oregon is policy drift. The reforms were conceived so long ago (1990) and were then revised substantially, while rules were developed and rewritten almost continuously, that few remember what the original purposes of reform were. Initial legislation talked about developing the best-educated citizenry in the nation and the best-prepared workforce in the world. Certificates were to be earned when students were ready to achieve them and were to allow students to move through a "seamless" educational system based on their achievements, not their age. High schools were to be transformed around six career tracks. Elementary schools were to become mixed-age. Assessment was to be based on portfolios of student work. Site councils were to give control to parents. Educational "outcomes" were to be broad and integrative, designed to prepare students for life in the 21st century. Students were to move at their own pace, unhindered by the boundaries between educational organizational units.

As reform has been institutionalized, it has been translated into the language of the school, of grade levels and schedules and familiar bromides for those who don't reach the standards, such as summer school or tutoring. The forces of institutionalism run deep, and teachers have not apparently engaged either individually or collectively in a rethinking of schooling. Currently, educator response seems to be primarily from a compliance perspective: what do we need to do and how will it affect us and our students? Support is lukewarm while active opposition is nearly non-existent. Although many of the ideas have some appeal, translating them into practice apparently has less. Belief that real change can or will occur is limited to perhaps a quarter of the teaching force.

The important influences of the principal and of fellow colleagues and even the teacher's value system imply that schools may need to do more than simply train teachers for reform. They may need to create space for educators to discuss and analyze the purposes and goals of reform and to consider its ramifications for them from perspectives broader than their individual classrooms. Reform may still serve as a vehicle for stimulating both professional conversation and growth. A balance between understanding and implementing might try to be established. Clear, consistent messages from the originators of reform appear to be necessary as well.

Spillane (1998), in his case studies of local variability in the implementation of state policy, adopted a cognitive perspective to help account for the variability in implementation. He concluded that diverse understandings of the reforms resulted from the interaction among educator beliefs about the reform (in this case, reading instruction), the situations in which the apprehended reform, and the particular information they received. He observes that

> The prevalence of norms that support discussion among local policy makers, for example, may influence their understanding of the reforms. Cognitivist theorists argue that knowing is a social endeavor; an individual's understanding is influenced by interactions with others (Brown et al., 1989). Consequently, the absence or presence and depth of opportunities for local policy makers to talk with each other about their understanding of reform proposals may be an important influence on the reform ideas they come to understand. (p. 54)

There are few indicators that these issues are being seriously considered at a policy level. However, site visits to schools that have been more successful in implementing reform offer evidence these suggestions are borne out in practice. In such schools, teachers meet considerably more often, participate in more cross-functional discussion and problem-solving groups, serve on task forces and other mechanisms for considering reform in a context and requiring educators to come to grips with the goals and potentialities of reform. In such schools responses to reform are almost always conceived of on a school-wide level, although individual teachers may pursue their personal implementation of reform. These schools also tend to modify or focus the reforms to meet the needs of their students or school norms. Many have been successful in doing so.

What will be interesting to observe will be the state's reaction if schools do not make rapid progress implementing reforms and improving student performance. The traditional long timelines schools need to institutionalize changes are being shortened dramatically. The loosely-linked units of the educational system, so successful at blunting change, may become a liability in an environment where policies are designed under the principle that those implementing policies understand and translate them into practice in ways

that lead not just to compliance, but to achievement of policy goals. If schools comply but student performance does not substantively improve, policy makers may decide that the loose coupling arrangement is more of a liability than an asset. Given the tremendous political and institutionalist costs of attempting to centralize the system dramatically, one might conjecture that an alternative would be to de-couple the system entirely and create direct accountability relationships between legislatures and education providers. Charter schools are an attempt to do exactly this. And educators already appear to be taking more signals from the state than from their local officials outside the school.

Compliance and institutionalist forces seem to be well-established in schools and to be anchors on reform, serving to slow its implementation. However, this is a reform program that is approaching its tenth anniversary. In that sense it is unusual. The state has sustained reform without necessarily seeing major changes yet in schools. Perhaps this extended period of acclimatization to reform is what is needed for schools to be prepared to change dramatically. Perhaps change will not occur continuously or incrementally, but in a relatively short period of time at some point in the near future. And perhaps a new generation of teachers about to enter the profession over then next seven to ten years will simply enter with values and attitudes that take reform assumptions and goals as givens. Current data suggest the state will want to consider a variety of strategies for institutionalizing reforms at the school level and of giving school faculties the time and resources to make meaning of the reforms and to reshape their internal cultures, values, and social systems to align with state policy goals if reforms are to have the effects on student learning the state desires.

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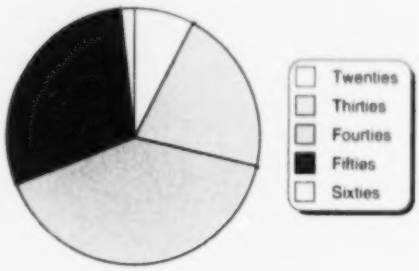
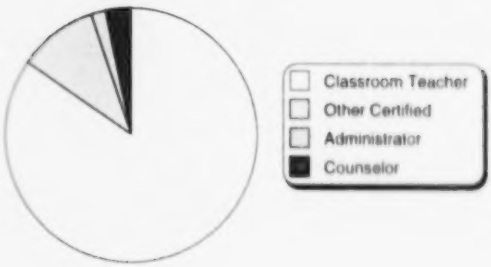
Demographic Characteristics of School Reform Survey Respondents

Age of Respondents

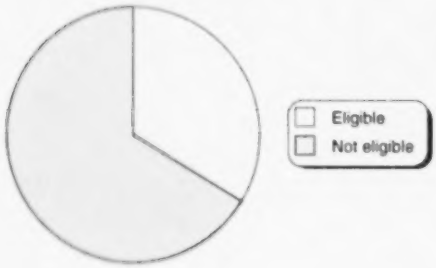


Gender of Respondents

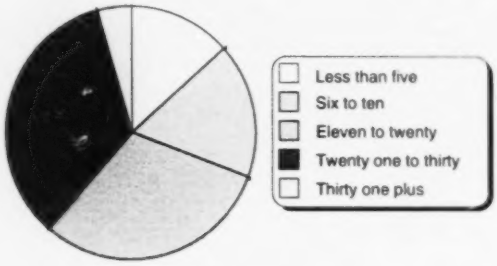
Position of Respondents



Respondents Eligible to Retire



Experience of Respondents



Respondents Likely to Retire by Fall, 2005